DARK HORSE 20 YEARS

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

124 $2.99 US

BAREFOOT 3 OF 5

HIROAKI SAMURA

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by DANA LEWIS
lettering and retouch by TOMOKO SAITO
cover colors by RYAN HILL

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI

Immortal *rōnin*, vowed to protect Rin and aid her in her quest for revenge

RIN

Last heir of the Mutenichi-*ryū dōjō* which was destroyed by the Ittō-*ryū*.

HABAKI KAGIMURA

Powerful *bangashira*, serving the shogun and seeking the secret of immortality.

DŌA

Dōa, an Ittō-*ryū* warrior, is slowly befriending Rin, with neither of them knowing their real connection.

ISAKU

Dōa's trusted body-guard and member of the Ittō-*ryū*, recently imprisoned for a street fight Dōa started.

BURANDO

Deranged doctor and pioneer in *kessen-chu* transference.

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessen-chu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for this and for the 100 innocent people who died at his hand while he served a corrupt lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

Imprisoned in an underground cell, Manji is an unwilling participant in Habaki Kagimura's "immortality experiments." Kagimura's unconventional lead doctor, Burando, is finally released from his own stay in prison, and he returns to the experiments with renewed vigor. In order to deter any emotional attachment for the doomed inmates that he works on, he orders that they all wear crude otter masks. Separated from both Manji and Isaku, Rin acts on a tip from Giichi to spy on Kagimura and Edo Castle.

designer SCOTT COOK editorial assistant RYAN JORGENSEN
editor PHILIP SIMON publisher MIKE RICHARDSON

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無限の住人

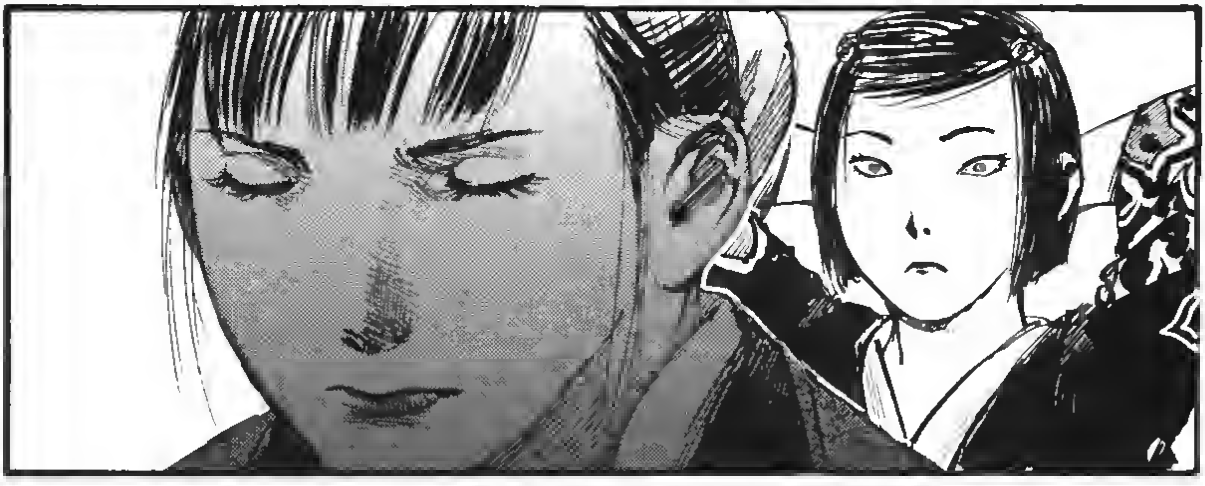
BAREFOOT

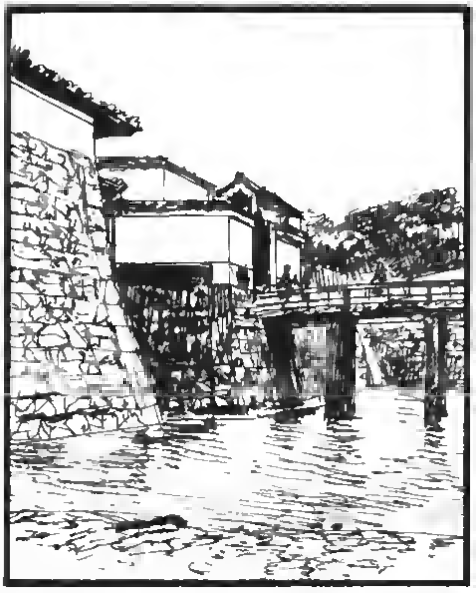
-part three-

THIS ONE'S HOPE-LESS.

RIN. LET *ME* LOOK NEXT TIME.

C'MON! *PLEASE?* LET *ME.*
BE QUIET!





THIS ONE, TOO.

BORRR-ING...

IS HE REAL-LY IN THERE?

PEH!

STOP IGNOR-ING ME !!

:hhf:
:hhf:

...RIN?

WHY, YOU--
!?
YOU HAVING YOUR PERIOD?
YOU'RE ALL WEIRD.
EVER SINCE WE LEFT KOJI'S.
I'M RIN ASANO. I LIVE OVER NEAR SHITAYA...
HOH HOH?!
.....
.....
SORRY.
RIN, ARE YOU? EVEN PRETTIER THAN YOUR NAME.

SHE'S PUTTING ME UP.
I SEE. I SEE. DON'T FORGET TO THANK HER.
OH, IT'S NOTHING...
DŌA. IS THAT O-SHIROI?
HN? YEAH...
HARDLY RECOGNIZE YOU IN THAT.
REALLY? YOU LIKE?
NOW YOU BE CAREFUL GOING HOME.
WAIT!
YOU NITWIT! WHAT ELSE CAN I SAY?!
HOW SHOULD I KNOW WHERE ISAKU IS?!
BUT EVERYONE SAYS KASHIN KOJI'S TIGHT WITH OFFICIALS...
I SAID-- DON'T CALL ME THAT.
OFFICIALS? JUST DOC-TORS! TENI!
THE SHOGUN'S RHEUMATISM... SOME BUREAUCRAT'S HEMOR-RHOIDS... THAT'S ALL I HEAR ABOUT.

P-PARDON ME! DON'T THE GOTEN-I KNOW OTHER THINGS...
...ABOUT THE CASTLE?
HNN?
I MEAN, ONE OF MY FRIENDS IS MISSING, TOO...
...AND THINKING ABOUT IT, IT'S POSSI-BLE...
...HE'S BEING HELD IN THERE...
WOW! THEN MAYBE ISAKU'S THERE, TOO!
HE IS! I'M SURE OF IT!
STOP YOUR BLATHER-ING!
JUST FORGET IT!
I KNOW NOTHING. EVEN IF SOME TENI DID KNOW, HE'D NEVER TELL A TOWN DOC.
WELL, FINE!
WE'LL SNEAK IN AND SEE, RIGHT?!
EH? UHM, SNEAK IN...?
DŌA!!
HAVE YOU ANY IDEA WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?

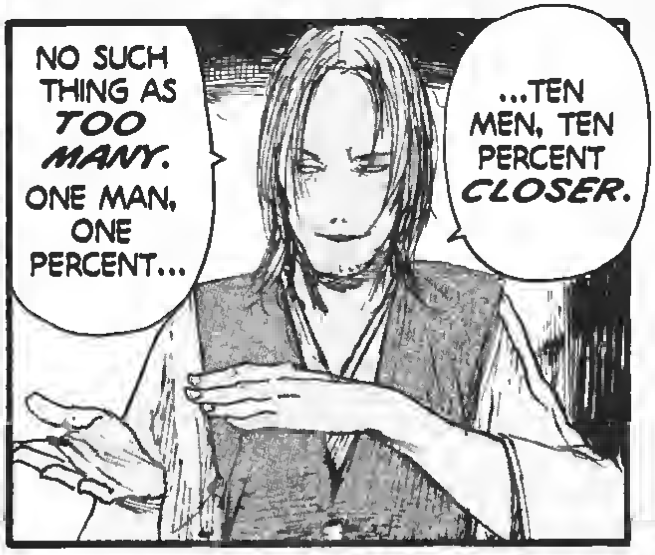
RILE THE SHOGUN-ATE NOW...
...IT HURTS YOUR PRECIOUS "BOSS"...
!
IT'S THE SAME WITH MY PROJECT.
THIS IS MY WINDOW. TALKING DOCTOR TO DOCTOR. IF WE STIR THINGS UP AND PUT THEM ON GUARD...
...EVERY-THING'S LOST.
AS FOR ISAKU...
DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT!

...REALLY?
OF COURSE! NO ONE'S SAYING ABANDON HIM!
..I'LL WORK IT... USE SOME CONNEC-TIONS.
BUT THE TRUTH IS, IT'S A BAD TIME TO POKE AROUND.
THEY'RE ROUNDING UP OMOTE ISHI AND OKU ISHI FOR SOME FOOL "IMMORTALITY" EXPERIMENT.
ONLY THE DROP-OUTS HAVE TIME FOR ME.
AN EXPERI-MENT?
IN IMMOR-TALITY ?!

H-
HABAKI-
DONO...
...THIS IS
SOME
SERIOUS
OVER-
CROWDING...

I WAS SUMMONED BY *WAKA-DOSHIYORI* SYMPATHETIC TO THE EXPERIMENT...
...THEY SAID THE PAPER-WORK FOR ALL THESE PRISONER TRANSFERS IS *ONEROUS* AND THE PRISON *BUGYŌ'S* REPUTATION IS AT RISK...
...BUT THEY'LL TURN A BLIND EYE IF I PLACE THE FELONS UNDER MY JURISDIC-TION.
WE CAN'T HAVE THAT ON THE SHOGUN'S DOORSTEP.
DAMN!
FREE ME!
LET US OUT!
SPARE MEEE!
...WE CAN'T HANDLE THE *FOOD* OR THE *WASTE*.
WHAT IF THERE'S AN *EPI-DEMIC*?
BUT... BUT, *SIR*...
HAVE NO FEAR, HABAKI-*DONO*.

BURAN-
DO...


NO SUCH THING AS TOO MANY. ONE MAN, ONE PERCENT...
...TEN MEN, TEN PERCENT CLOSER.

THEY WON'T HAVE TIME TO GET SICK.

NNNGG GAAA!

HOLD HIM LIKE THAT.
NOOO!
NOOO! STOP! DONNN'T--
RIGHT. NEXT!
BURANDO-DONO. NOT TO BE PRESUMP-TUOUS...
...BUT MAY I ASK SOME-THING?

THIS SURGERY YOU'RE DOING...?
HOW IS IT ANY DIFFERENT...
...FROM *BEFORE* YOU WERE JAILED?
AS FAR AS I CAN SEE...
...YOU'RE JUST... DOING IT *FASTER.*
HM? YOU THINK SO?
MAYBE IT'S GOING TO LOOK LIKE THAT...
...BUT I *TELL* YOU, TORAEMON. I'LL EXPLAIN WHY LATER, BUT...
...THESE LAST FEW DAYS...?
I'M *SHIVERING* IN ANTICIPATION OF A *FABULOUS OUTCOME!*
YES! IF WE KEEP UP THE PACE...

...WE'LL REACH THE NEXT STAGE IN TWO DAYS!

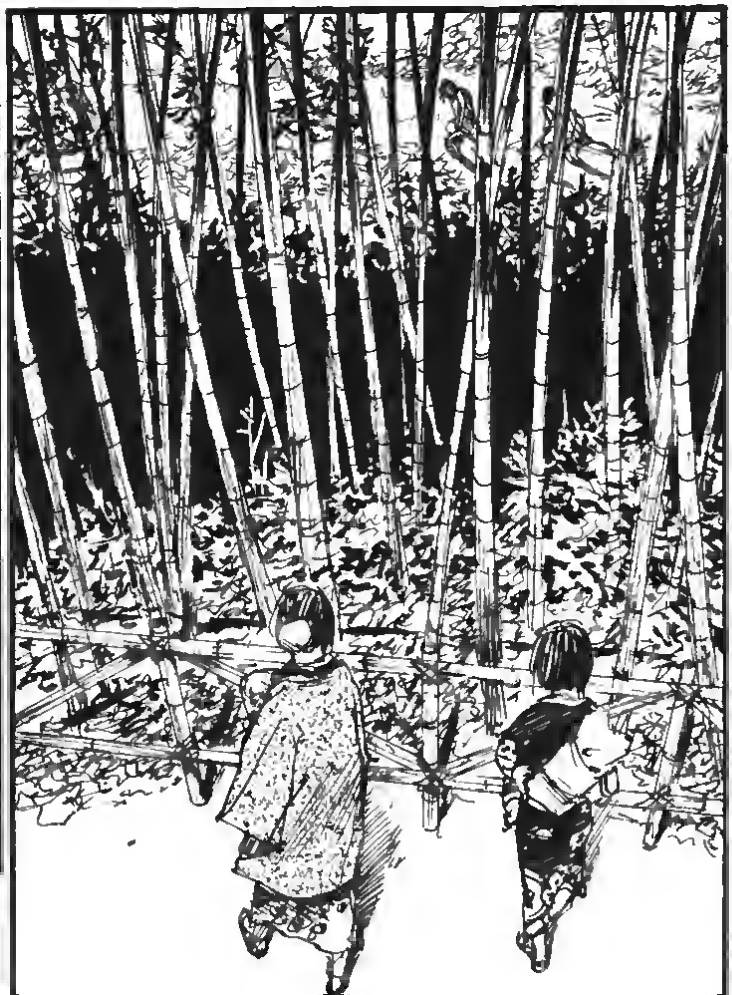
...?

HEY!
ARM'S STICKING OUT.
SORRY.

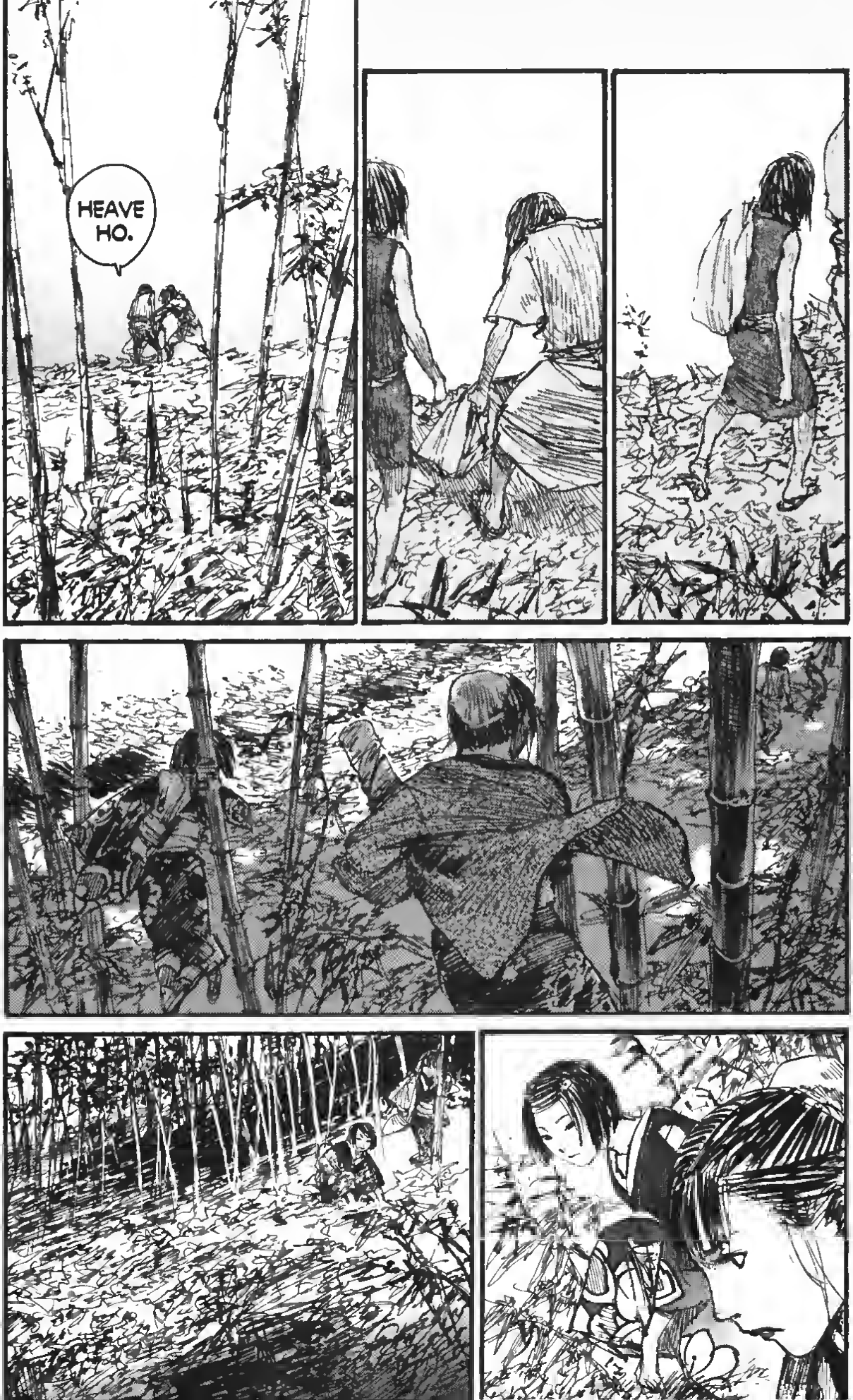
I CAN'T TAKE THIS...

HUFF...
NO OPENING ANY-WHERE...
...I'M STARV-ING.
GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT...

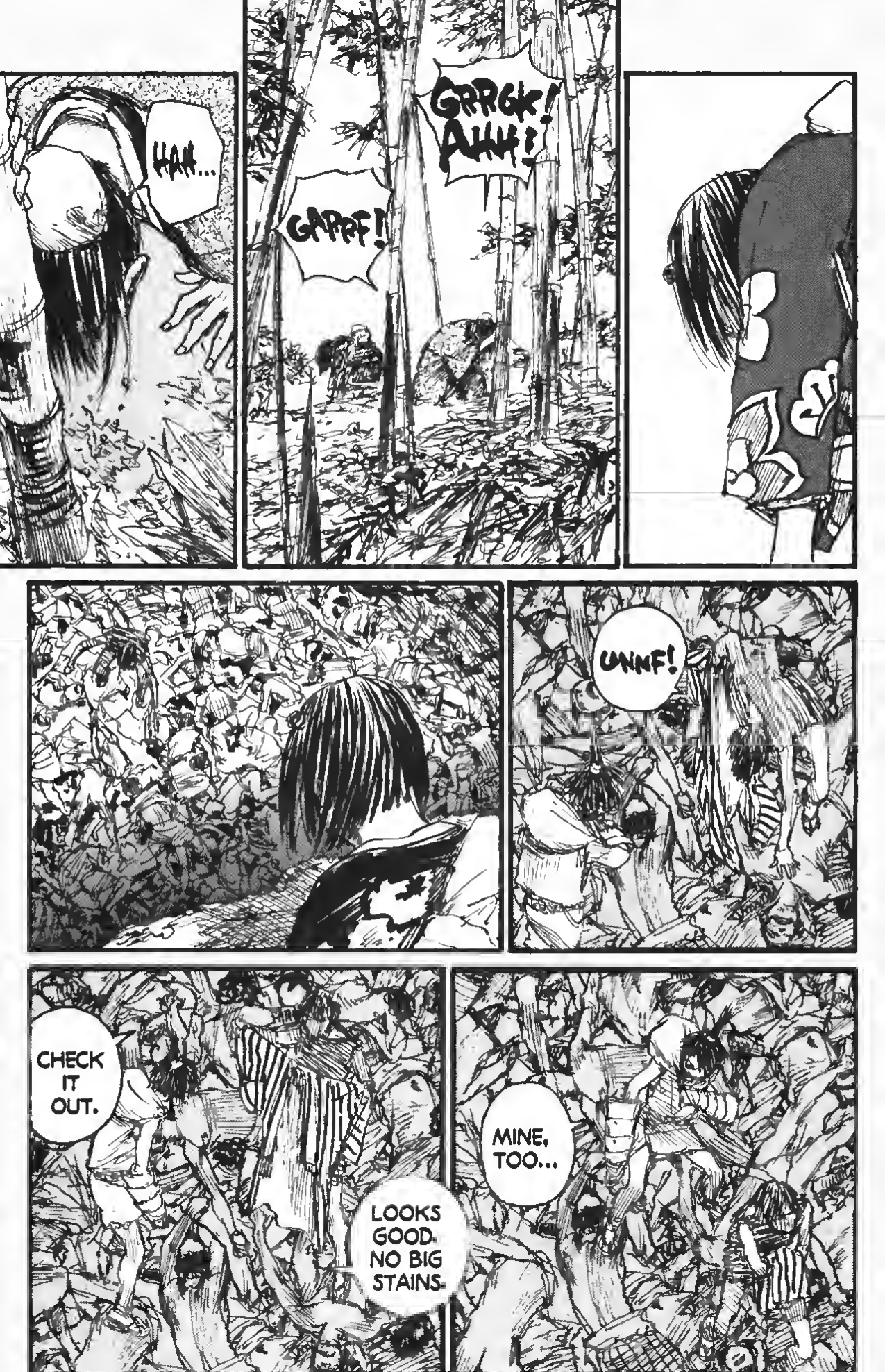
HUH...?
WHAT'S
THAT?



PICKING BAMBOO SHOOTS?
HM? MAYBE NOT?
THAT BAG...
THAT SIZE...
.....
.....
.....


HEAVE HO.

.....
.....
.....
EMP


HAH...
GAPPF!
GRRGK! AHH!
UNNF!
CHECK IT OUT.
LOOKS GOOD. NO BIG STAINS.
MINE, TOO...

SKUNK!
DŌA...?
HN?

.....
.....
.....
EHHH
?!

AHYAAAA!!
DŌA! DON'T!!
.....
.....
.....!

SLASH!
ECCHH!
SLRK
WOOAH!
DŌA...
!!

WAIT!
WAIT!
WAIT!
N-NOT
ME!
WRONG
GUY!

H-
HELLP...

ENOUGH!

YOU'RE TARNISHING THE ITTŌ-RYŪ'S NAME!

...WHAT... DID YOU...?
DŌA...
TO BE CONTINUED...!

無限の住人

GLOSSARY

Bangashira: Head of the *banshū.*

Banshū: Officers serving under the shogun, usually assigned to Edo Castle to defend the shogun himself.

Bugyō: a high-ranked samurai in charge of keeping the peace, with the help of the men under his command and volunteer "posse" members.

Dōjō: A school for combat and self-defense training in martial arts; here, a training center for swordsmanship.

Dono: Archaic honorific used to show respect, usually for someone of a higher rank.

Edo: Capital of pre-modern Japan. Later renamed Tokyo.

Ittō-ryū: The radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa.

Kessen-chu: The "sacred bloodworms." A person infected by them cannot die but feels pain like a mortal.

Mutenichi-ryū: The sword school led by Rin's father (now deceased), destroyed by Anotsu Kagehisa.

Oku Ishi and Omote Ishi: Inner sanctum doctors (*oku*) and those on the outside (*omote*)

O-Shirai: The white powder makeup of the Edo period, still worn by *geisha* and their *maiko* apprentices.

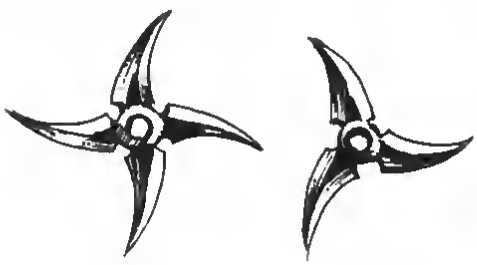
Ryū: A sword school.

Teni: Ooctor to the shogun and his ministers.

Wakadoshiyori: While the *gō-rōjū* elders were the *shogun's* closest advisors, an advisory council of *wakadoshiyori* lords were the hands-on managers of the shogunate bureaucracy

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Artwork: The author of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Some manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and repasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used instead.



Rin by Hiroaki Samura, from his "China Cats" series of pinups.

LETTERS

Send letters and fan art to:

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Salutations and thanks to Olumuyiwa Jonathan Ajagbe (from Miami, Florida) and Jhomar Soriano (from Quezon City in the Philippines)!! Mr. Ajagbe provided this month's color back cover pinup—a striking look at our unconventional rōnin protagonist and some weapons of choice. Olumuyiwa is currently working on his *Handman* comic book series, which deals with the stifling racial problems that still plague the world and one person's search for acceptance, safety, and happiness. Check out oja-art.com to get a look at some of Mr. Ajagbe's other projects and to order *Handman* #1. Mr. Soriano is here again with another wonderful strip, and he promises more in the near future! Thanks, gents! And thank YOU for visiting every month! We'll see you next issue, when Kagimura says, "They've perfected so many horrendous deaths, you have to admire their creativity."

—Philip Simon

JHOMAR SORIANO

Manji

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